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UNCLAS JEDDAH 001905

SIPDIS

RIYADH PLEASE PASS TO DHAHRAN, PARIS FOR ZEYA, LONDON FOR
GOLDRICH

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: GOVERNOR OF ASIR SUPPORTS AL-BIR CHARITY

1. (SBU) During a visit to al-Bir School and Orphanage in Abha on June 13, Poloffs met with Director Samiha Mohammed Dawood. For 17 years, Dawood has worked for al-Bir, a charity which provides financial assistance to needy Saudi families and also supports orphanages in Jeddah and Abha. According to Dawood, funding for the orphanage and school comes by way of private donations, a large sum of which comes directly from the Governor of Asir, Prince Khaled bin Faisal. Secondary funding comes from the Ministry of Social Affairs.

AL-BIR ORPHANAGE WELCOMES SAUDI AND FOREIGN CHILDREN

2. (SBU) Dawood works closely with the Governor's wife, Princess al-Anoud, who serves as the Director of the women's section of al-Bir Charity in Abha, and the Ministry of Social Affairs to maintain high quality care for the 98 orphans who currently reside in the hostel. Dawood also helps bring abandoned children, both Saudi and foreign, to al-Bir. As a clean, bright facility, staffed with professional nurses and social workers, the orphanage is perhaps the best in the Kingdom. Girls at the orphanage attend the al-Bir private school along side with students who come from towns throughout Asir. Students from Asir must pay tuition, whereas the orphans are supported by al-Bir Charity and the Ministry of Social Affairs.

AL-BIR SCHOOL ENCOURAGES A MIXTURE OF ART AND ISLAM

3. (SBU) The al-Bir School includes grades 1 through 9 and has approximately 600 students. As a private school, not subject to Saudization laws which require public schools to hire 100% Saudi teachers, al-Bir employs approximately half Saudi and half foreign teachers, many of whom are Egyptian. Students are required to take typical core classes like math and science, but may also choose from a wide variety of electives, such as art and swimming. In the summer months, creativity is encouraged and girls are taken on field trips to the mountains to sketch and paint. Equally important, Dawood emphasized, is the study of Islam. Pointing to a sign hanging in the hallway that read, "The Qur'an is our constitution," Dawood said such classes focus on teaching Islamic values.

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ABERCROMBIE-WINSTANLEY